IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows.

1. (Original) A method for inhibiting infection, comprising:
(a) causing a rapid temperature change in a suspected area of infection;
(b) discontinuing the causing of the rapid temperature change; and
(c) assessing the suspected area for occurrence of infection.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the causing of step (a) is continued until a predetermined temperature is reached.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the predetermined temperature is sustained for a predetermined period of time, prior to step (b).

4. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the causing of step (a) occurs until any discomfort in the suspected area decreases to a predetermined level.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the assessing comprises evaluating a subject's level of discomfort.

6. (Original) The method of claim 5, wherein treatment is terminated if the evaluating indicates a rapid increase in discomfort followed by a gradual decrease in discomfort.

7. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising repeating steps (a) – (c) if the assessing in step (c) indicates that infection may still occur.

8. (Original) An apparatus for inhibiting infection, comprising:
a heat transfer element having a surface configured to be positioned in close proximity to a suspected area of infection; and

a thermal energy source for altering a temperature of the surface of the heat transfer element until a predetermined temperature is reached.

9. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the thermal energy source forms an integral unit with the heat transfer element.

10. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the surface of the heat transfer element is configured to a shape of a target area.

11. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising a temperature detector.

12. (Original) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the temperature detector regulates activation of the thermal energy source.

13. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising at least one selected from an input and an output~~, for communicating with at least one other device~~.

14. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising an insulating element.

15. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, further comprising a positioning element.

16. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the thermal energy source is separately replaceable.

17. (Original) The apparatus of claim 8, wherein the thermal energy source includes an input for renewal of at least one component of the thermal energy source.

18. (Currently Amended) A method for using an apparatus for inhibiting infection, comprising:

positioning a surface of a heat transfer element in close proximity to a suspected area of infection; and

activating the apparatus to cause a rapid temperature change in the suspected area of infection.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus once a treatment criteria is met.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the activating is initiated by a temperature detector.

21. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the activating occurs for a predetermined period.

22. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the activating is initiated by one or more external devices in communication with the apparatus.

23. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus based on reaching a predetermined temperature in a target area.

24. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising discontinuing activation of the apparatus based once a predetermined temperature of a target area is maintained for a predetermined amount of time.